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A

DISCOURSE

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On Sunday, March 12, 1865,

on the

Twenty-fifth Anniversary of his Ordination.

BY GEORGE E. ELLIS.

With an Historical Note.

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ABRAM E. CUTTER.
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DISCOURSE.

ACTS XX. 24:

"THE MINISTRY WHICH I HAVE RECEIVED OF THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD."

SUCH, in the definition of an official trust, and of the standard of duty which it appoints and consecrates, is the full commission of a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the free, bold speech which floats in the air of our modern life, those words of official commission may be pronounced antiquated. But they are destined to outlive eras and ages of debate and dispute about them, and to prolong into undated time the unbroken succession of Christian teachers.

Those words had, I trust, their full meaning for me, — I know they had a deep and solemn meaning for me, — when, twenty-five years ago yesterday, I trembled under the burden of undefined obligation imposed upon me, in the devotional part of the ordination services which made me the minister of this Christian Church and Society. I felt then, as I have felt ever since, and never more profoundly than I feel to-day, that over and distinct from every honor or

privilege or office which you, or those whom you represent, then intrusted to me, I was receiving a commission from Jesus Christ, to be a minister of his gospel of grace from God. As to any presumption of professional conceit, or any defiance of prelatical or ecclesiastical theories on the subject of ministerial succession or authority, I was as unconscious as was the youngest child who might have been in the pews. The source of the commission, not its channels, absorbed my thought. I knew that I was undertaking an office whose duties and sphere and means and purposes were so well defined by Jesus Christ, that he alone had the power of appointment to it. I have never for a moment been troubled by a misgiving of the lack of any credentials or qualifications with which prelates or councils could invest me. There is, indeed, a succession in the ministry; a transmission of offices, functions, and means. But it is the gift of the grace of God descending through the line, and not the line itself, which perpetuates the ministry, and which is itself the ministration. Sure I am, that no one can pursue the work of the ministry for a period of years, without learning, through his heart and conscience, whether he is dealing with it as a sacred trust received from Christ, or as a mere calling, occupation, or profession, for employment, position, or a livelihood. Certain it is, that no routine work done in this world can be more distressingly wearisome in the doing, nor more oppressively burdened with reproaches of conscience in what is done, as well as in

what is left undone, than is the work of the ministry without love for it, and the spirit of fidelity in its discharge. I know full well that I have lacked some of the qualifications which have been the divine endowments of many other ministers. I know, too, that I have lacked other qualifications which greater personal fidelity in the training of my heart and spirit, and in the use of my time and faculties, would have secured to me. I realize better than you do my deficiencies. My own heart makes no boast to me. But as to what it plainly speaks, and what it gently whispers to me of short-comings and errors, — running through all the days since that ordination service, — it says to me, and not to you. I trust I am all the more sensible of my defects and short-comings, because your kindness has forbid my hearing of them from you, and has left me to discover them by my own self-reckoning.

This day is the reproduction of that which I recall. The same clear sunlight; the same blustering wind; the same penetrating chill of air, return with the season. Some of the fresh and sensitive feelings of the occasion come back to me to-day, with a deepened and hallowed tenderness wrought in them and by them through these swiftly numbered years. To the divine Source and Guardian of my life, to whom with you I have offered so many prayers here and in your houses; who has given me so full and large a share of all pleasant earthly allotments, fair privileges, and rich opportunities; to him, for all his goodness and for-

bearance, I offer the gratitude of my heart. To you, my kind parishioners and friends, for your steady and quiet relations of fidelity and responsive sympathy, and for all your many single tokens of individual and united regard and generosity, I would here express, as words may do it, the fulness of my thanks. I recall no occasion, through all these years, of variance or ill-feeling, or even of disturbed friendliness, between myself and a single individual among you. In these last years I have heard the echo of a whisper, that I preserved so strong a regard for the endeared and honored of our circle who are no longer here, as to be slow in forming the same ties with all newcomers. That is probably true. But they were your friends as well as mine; and indeed some of my strongest ties to many of you were knit by those for whom we had a common respect and love. We need not spend much anxious or constrained effort in trying to adjust the measure of our affection or interest for the successive companions of our ever-changing fellowship on the earth. It is enough, if, by degrees of acquaintanceship with new features, and of sympathy with a new generation of human hearts, we may mutually serve, in the great assemblings hereafter, to introduce those who, but for our intermediate relation, would have been strangers to each other.

Let me recall, with brevity, the circumstances under which my official relation to this parish began. Your former minister had resigned his office here, on July 15, 1839, to assume the duties of a professorship in

the University. Having been ordained here April 15, 1818, his connection with you had continued a little more than twenty-one years. The honor and veneration which now attach to him, from the discharge of later and more public trusts, are the crowning tribute of the lofty esteem and the fond regard which clung to him when he belonged to you. It must have been, it was, a grievous trial for a Church to part with such a teacher and pastor, in the very maturity of his powers.

Having recently returned from foreign travel, your pulpit, with others that needed occasional supplies, was offered to my transient occupancy. Beginning with September 1, 1839, it was intrusted to me for four Sundays, to be filled by myself or by exchanges. Again, beginning with October 20, I preached here on the whole, or on a part, of seven Sundays, up to the close of the year. I had no thought of offering myself as a candidate for settlement here. Had that trial-position been proposed to me directly, I think I should have declined it. For I knew well the fame and ability of him with whom you had parted; and among those who thought they knew, or who were interested to know, the repute of this parish, its elements, and the conditions of ministerial work in it, it was regarded as a very difficult and exacting place for a young man. I was taken by surprise when, on January 10, 1840, I received an official notice that you had held a parish-meeting, and extended to me an invitation to become your minister. I knew, before

I preached here, only two persons who resided in the town. While I was exercised in mind and feeling over the questions of fitness, duty, and inclination, which were pressing upon me, a ministerial friend and brother, whose home was among you, privately informed me that there was a variance in the parish. I had been heard many times in the pulpit. Another candidate, who had filled the pulpit only three half-days, had greatly interested some of the society, who felt aggrieved that final action had been pressed by a majority before he had had a fair trial. I was told, that the vote of the parish, as given by one hundred and nine of the proprietors, cast eighty-three for me, and twenty-six against me. That other candidate* was my friend, and one whom I esteemed and loved. He was my superior in endowments and graces. A pure and faithful soul was his. He afterwards had other, several, places in which, for brief periods, he served in the ministry which he loved, always to the highest appreciation of the best and most receptive of those around him. But, on the whole, his was a broken and troubled ministry: of unrealized aims, and of success and estimate far, far below the sterling deserts of his character and mind. Ten years have passed since his short life closed; one of those lives which, because of its unfulfilled promise on the earth, not through lack of beauty or of power, but through infelicity of conditions and adaptations,

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* Rev. George F. Simmons.

may excel, in the glory of the celestial home, the more successful in earthly rivalries.

It was because of what I had learned in reference to the feeling for that other candidate, that I communicated to the society my hesitation to accept their call. I wrote as follows referring to my information, that some of the parish insisted that the just claims of another candidate had not been regarded: "It seems to me, that such a feeling, whether founded in a sense of right or in a preference, should be respected: otherwise its existence would be an early and a disagreeable experience in my ministry. The partiality of a majority in such a matter should not slight the just wishes of a minority."

The committee soon afterwards informed me by letter, that further canvassing showed, that, of twenty-five proprietors who had not been present at the voting, only one was in opposition; and that the opposition was not personal to myself. The members of the Church, connected with the society, voting separately, were unanimous in extending to me their invitation to this pastorate. So I came here. I have never regretted the choice of my life's work; nor of the place, the scene, the subjects of it. Thrice I might have changed these last, for others. I have been employed and contented here, and have had a full share of the satisfactions of a sacred and pleasant relation, with not a single one of the trials or annoyances so often incident to it.

With uniform vigor and elasticity of bodily health,

fitting me for the hours and duties of continuous study, and for all regular and incidental services in the pulpit and the parish, twenty-five years of time have made for me their record of providential experience. These years have fled, and chased each other as the tides have ebbed and flowed in the rivers which bathe the foundations of our dwellings; as the leaves which have fallen in successive autumns. To call back those years again is to call back how many other things, — and what are not things beside! — persons, friends, loved and honored forms familiar to the eye; impressions recorded in the heart; scenes; incidents; occasions, sad and bright, of festival and of lamentation; providences fearful and benedictive; losses and gains; homes in which the light of domestic life has gone out, and has been kindled in joy again; caskets, the deposits of infant forms, the elect of death, fairer than the summer flowers strewn over them; and other caskets, with their treasures of maturer love and sorrow, and with the relics of those so aged and withered with years that they would have seemed to us but the stubble of the gleaning, were it not for the grain of the reproductive life which had headed in the dry stalks. All — all bliss and woe, all opportunities and uses, all peace and conflict, all that the ways and will of God crowds into a period of completed years — comes back with them; and if a devout spirit can review them, and a serene hope can crown them, they part with all that may have been sad in them.

In the exercise of this ministerial office for such a period of years, a question rises in my mind which I may be supposed able to answer, with some maturity of thought and experience, if I can but rid myself sufficiently of professional bias to answer it with any degree of impartiality. The question is this: Is there occasion and need, is there a healthful want, is there a useful and exacting range of service, in our modern communities, to be filled by ministers like myself? Are we wanted? Are we of use? Is there something for us to do? Is there something which we really do? Do we justify and make good our presence and professional calling? Should we be missed by an omitted and craving service, if we subsided utterly?

I take into view the widest range of all the activities and exigencies of human life. My mind sweeps the compass and contents of all the tasks and labors given to all human wants and comforts, from the reception into life of each new-born infant, to the casting of the earth back into the newly-tenanted grave. I see how all around me, mixed of four generations, are each adding to the amount of all this work, or doing some of it. I take each year through, made of days, and a course of years, multiplying the incidents and changes of the same stints of labor. I walk the streets and roads, look over fields and mills, look into shops and houses, peer into cellars and workshops, and mount into the attics of mechanic toil. I see the throngs distributing them-

selves in the morning to their vocations, — seated, standing, running to and fro, — and coming home again at evening to pursue other parts of the same labor. They are making, preparing human food, clothing; furnishing means of subsistence, medicines, appliances, reliefs, trinkets, amusements, luxuries, means of folly and vice. A generous view of all the occupations, and even of the make-shifts, by which the crowds around us obtain employment and subsistence, leads us to extend a broadly charitable allowance for all employments and ingenious devices, even for creating artificial wants. The maker of dolls and toys, the ventriloquist, the magician, and the singer, and even those who post their attractive bills; the caterers for innocent pleasure; the cultivators of flowers in the winter, and the makers of artificial flowers, — all stand in a liberal judgment as members of the body of the Commonwealth, sharing the labors needful for the promotion of human comfort and happiness. Amid all this variety of service, the great, divine test of all relations between man and men is a question of use. Have I, through my special professional calling, a place anywhere — I care not for its relative position on the scale — on this roll of workers; having my hours, following the bell, with a right to go here or there without obtrusiveness, and with something that I may honestly call work and service? As I walk your streets, either among those who cleanse them, or those who pass over them to their various labors, may I say to

myself, "I, too, have something to do, — something which serves others?"

And, asking it of myself, I must ask it of my brethren; of those of the same official calling, walking these same streets, dividing these homes with me, — the Catholic priests, the ministers of all our churches.

My friends, it requires no help from personal or professional vanity to allow me to say "yes" to that question. I have not been an idler. Indeed, my great misgiving for years has been, whether a mere routine-working; a method and regularity of tasks; repetition without variation; conformity to a fixed course and means, without intermitting, re-adapted, and experimental efforts, — has not limited the use of my activity. Perhaps so. Probably so.

When, amid the spheres and forms of service of man for man, a place has been found for that represented by the ministerial office, the whole further interest of the subject concerns that of individual ability and fidelity and aptitude. The qualities and spirit of the individual make of that office much or little, and measure its successful or disappointing experiment, for him. The loftier his own estimate of its possibilities and its responsibilities, the more sharply he can define, and even isolate, its objects; the greater concentration of purpose and zeal can he give to it. The great question is that of the adaptation of a particular individual to one particular congregation of persons and families. They have

been gathered by his predecessor. If he has magnified and graced his office, he has set a high standard. The words of the maturely wise have been as bolts and nails driven straight and firm by the master. Those of his successor may be as blows, without bolts to be driven by them. The marvel is, that even the majority of a mixed congregation can harmonize under the circumstances. I have often congratulated myself on the good feeling and considerateness and tolerance which so kindly adjusted relations between us.

Schemes and devices and projects have suggested themselves, or been hinted by others to me, for what is called "infusing new life," or "drawing in young people," or building up the church communion, or calling throngs to listen to lectures on temporary excitements, or promoting some transient enthusiasm, or advancing some good cause. My self-respect has prevented my doing or favoring some of these things: I could not carry countenance or confidence into them. As to others of them, I confess to a lack in my temperament of the enthusiastic element. I distrust schemes, intriguings, devices, surprises, indirect ingenuities, for getting round people in religion. Especially do I abhor every thing that looks like religion "on false pretences;" the cajoling young people, or older people, by hiding the pill of piety in floral, social, dramatic, rural, or musical blandishments or fascinations. If there is an interest of human beings which may stand on its own positive

independence in appeal and power, it is religion. When the older members of a Christian society are moved to suggest or to rely upon any special device of an extraneous character for interesting their young people, it will generally be the case that the root of any existing difficulty among them, if not manifestly chargeable upon the incompetence of the minister, will be a lack of interest, of fidelity, or of the influence of example and authority among the older persons themselves.

When the time comes for you to have another minister, I can easily believe that you may find one endowed and trained and influenced quite differently from myself, who will be better adapted to, at least, a part of the membership of this society. He will freshen and renew the life and activity and interest among you; he will engage new hands and hearts and voices, that are idle or cold or silent now. The great reason why a minister, after years of trial, does not interest some of his flock, is because he has never yet done it, and they have ceased to expect it. There is good work to be done here by somebody.

Yet I have been at work which has employed me, and sometimes tried me. The most of it has been attractive in itself; easy, too, and grateful. And even the most exacting and painful part of it has been directly or indirectly so engaged with human sensibilities, needs, and sorrows, as to have yielded its reward in some satisfaction.

This sphere of service is one which makes an

equal draught on the resources of mind and heart; and yet it fills and renews those resources, furnishing within what it afterwards draws out. I turn over with amazement, with dismay, the masses of written paper prepared for the pulpit and the lecture-room, covered with what was certainly intended to serve for sacred instruction, helps to devotional culture, and means of moral and religious improvement. It divides itself beneath my eye and memory into two distinct portions, — one of information, one of exhortation. It has been my purpose and effort all through my ministry to teach intelligently, and to let the whole interest of my themes and method depend upon the simplicity and the substantial truth of what I have taught. I have tried that every young person growing up under any thing more than a merely chance relation to this Church and society, should receive here the essentials of a religious education. Those who have availed themselves of opportunities, who have had moderate capacities to receive and understand, and whose parents have encouraged and exercised their authority, will acquit me of intentional neglect in this.

The lineage of our own especial fellowship in the great fold of Christendom is drawn through those who steadily dropped out of their creed and reverence, every thing which they could not intelligently believe and profoundly venerate; making up for the sacrifice by deeper and more earnest convictions, attaching to the loftiest themes of Christian wisdom

and piety. If, in the free and bold, but not unchastened or conceited exercise of our reasoning powers, we utterly reject the old formularies of a dogmatic theology, we trust that it is only to be drawn, by living spiritual sympathies of divine truth, to the august verities of an instructed and constraining piety. We may, indeed, err in the excess of our didactic or speculative interest, as proportioned to our devotional culture; but we can re-adjust those proportions by increasing the latter, without diminishing the former.

In the calm, full estimate of our best wisdom and experience, we say, unchallenged, that religion is the subject of profoundest concern to all human beings. We then take up that mighty and transcendent theme, and seek to dispense its truth and influence, that each living man and child and woman may receive a fit portion from it. The work lies amid the conditions which perplex and impede it. The varieties of intelligence and temperament, of conscious or unconscious need, of co-operating or resisting feeling, will, of course, qualify its effect on individuals. But, allowing for this, the most effective appeals and lessons of religion are those which it addresses, in the simplest language of common life, and through thoughts level to the common mind, to just such companies as are gathered in our mixed congregations. Human beings classed together by affinities of temperament, taste, or culture, might need such an adaptation of religious instruction or influence to themselves as would be

powerless, unintelligible, or even offensive, to any other company thus arbitrarily or unnaturally selected.

The long and varied trial of what is essential and substantial in the office of the Christian Ministry, held strictly to the terms defined for it in my text, has shown the marvellous adaptation of the religion of Jesus Christ to the moral and spiritual wants of all classes of human beings. I have avowed my own conviction that a true minister of Jesus Christ is commissioned by him. Therefore I believe it to be the manifest duty of the Christian minister to refer back to the authority of Jesus Christ, and to feel an assurance, that the truths and the lessons which he teaches will work an effect wholly apart from his own eloquence or earnestness or ability in teaching them, because of the vital power of divine energy that is in them. I feel no sense of mental or spiritual thraldom in being under the authority of truth, in absolute subjection to truth; or, what is in effect the same, under subjection, as a minister, to him whom I believe to be the faithful and true witness of God. The Christian religion, in my own maturest thought of it, is the authorized and attested promulgation by Jesus Christ to the whole human race of a gospel of grace; that is, of a merciful, redeeming and benedictive dispensation from God, to his children on the earth. I make no summary here of the truths or doctrines, the primary or the subordinate elements and contents of that gospel, as a compend of my preaching. I have intended

either directly to proclaim them, or to proceed upon their acknowledged and accepted sanctions, in every sermon which I have preached from this desk.

Within those terms of absolute subjection to the authority of Christian truth, and of allegiance to its divine teacher, I recognize a range of freedom wide and boundless enough for every longing and capacity of my nature. And yet wide as that free range is, I am resolute to claim the whole of it. In accepting one Master, I stand clear of all others. I have rejoiced, how often and how gratefully I could not tell you, that my ministry has been in this our free fellowship of Congregationalism and Independency, and in no other. In no other fellowship could I hold such an office without galling constraint, or conscious insincerity. Each passing year of my mature life has deepened my satisfaction that I fell into the lineage and succession of that noble class of Christian men and women, who had broken every bond of hierarchical and ecclesiastical tyranny, and had asserted the spiritual freedom of each individual against every doctrinal system that had in it an iota of human ingenuity or dictation. You know, my friends, how boldly and defiantly, in the last score of years, even the primary verities and sanctions of religion have been dealt with by an unsparing radicalism. Amid my readings and inward questionings, I have had to meet the struggles, the dismay which all unsettling discussions, all restless speculations, bring with them on themes where certainty is impossible. And in the

saddest and darkest of those inward struggles, the consciousness of an unimpaired freedom, and an unpledged allegiance to any human system or formula of faith, has been my refuge, my comfort. If any ecclesiastical, covenanted, or creed obligation, even as thin as a spider's thread, had held me, it would have galled me as an iron fetter. I have never had to preach what I have been told I must believe; nor even what I was myself only trying to believe. Blessed be God for these free pulpits, for the use of those whom his Son makes free to speak or to be silent, according to the abundance or the want of thorough, earnest conviction.

Therefore I have loved the freedom of our own modes of devotion, without book or liturgical form. How often have I stood here to lead your prayers, when God's providence, God's work and way in the world, God's discipline of some of you in your homes, some awful catastrophe on land or sea, some sharp affliction, or some sweet and holy spell from the softened light and the mellow air, as in the balmy spring or the Indian Summer, has dictated and toned the spontaneous language of devotion, when, if I had had to pray from a book, my feelings would have been checked and chilled. God gives us changing sensibilities under the varying aspects of nature and of life. Why should not our responsive spirits fall into unison in their notes of praise and prayer? I have loved thus to greet the Spring-time, with its yielding cold passing off in rude blasts, with its gladdening promise,

and its fresh exhalations, rising, as that mysterious earth-smell congenial to our mortality, to meet the odorless and yet fragrant air of heaven. I have loved to praise the Summer with its lighter labors, and to bring back with the relief and vigor found on the mountain or the sea-shore, some new testimony and token of the lavish love of God, even if but in the phrasing of a prayer. I have welcomed the Autumn, with its gatherings-up of the threads of all work, and concentrated toil; and the Winter with its desolation and storms, because it varies the forms of God's care for us in comforts and joys, and renews our charities and deepens our religious thoughtfulness. I would try to interpret, through the same varied symbolism of faith and trust, the whole rolling year of God's constant providence and man's changing life, its piping joys to which the heart will dance even if the feet are still, and its wails of sorrow which die in the distance into a plaintive and holy music.

And these offices of the pulpit and the altar were to find their preparation in a portion of every day, given to mental and spiritual renewal. To have sat through those hours of many years in the quiet of a library-room, suited for study, thought, and the digestion of truth, is the scholar's luxury, redeemed from selfishness when its fruits are to be shared by others. Surrounded there by the choice and certified treasures of the wisdom and piety of the selecter spirits, the celestial minds of our race, one learns to prize the most that truth which has had the longest trial, which

has found the gravest or the sweetest utterance, and has trained the loftiest virtue. These are the treasures of the shelf. A hospitable, but not so hearty an intercourse may be held with the scattering heaps on the table of our ephemeral literature; especially with certain productions of our so-called "advanced thinkers;" whose claim to that title will be better certified, when, if ever, the world catches up with them.

The chief deduction which, in the matter of inward satisfaction, I experienced in the early years of my ministry, as to the need and use of this professional work, came from this suggestion. I found myself, my time and strength, my interest and sympathy, due and given to those around me who were the most privileged and prospered portion of this community: the educated, the refined, the well-to-do, surrounded with good influences, with the resources of friends, books, and social opportunities. In the mean while, there were those among us and around us, the poor, the struggling, the suffering, the neglected, the friendless, and the lowly, — the class especially indicated by the Saviour as the especial claimants from his gospel, but who yet received from it no congenial aid. You responded heartily to my pleading, that we might be relieved of this reproach. By building and sustaining another attractive place for free Christian instruction and worship, and by the voluntary support, now for seventeen years, of another minister, the agent of your benevolence, you have satisfied, in one direction, the law of Christian sympathy and love. And

this generous effort of yours for others has been a means of highest benefit to the internal vigor of your own society. I have heard of a poor man who kept himself warm through a winter by the exercise of gathering sticks for the fire of some poorer than himself. It is one exemplification of a universal law in all Christian service. That free ministry among us has organized Christian zeal and useful labor in our own parish. It has given me a circle of kindly, familiar, and co-operative friends, and a much esteemed colleague: the practical direction of whose zeal and service has been a complete security against that officiousness and dictation, so often a source of discord and trouble in parishes, coming from those who undertake to help the minister. Our experience has been of unqualified good in that matter.

And what shall I say of my daily walks through these crooked streets, to find always a welcome in your homes? There has been scarce a single week-day in all these years that I have not been in them, unless absent from the place. Nor can I call up a single exception to the summary of a sad statement, that, of the homes in which my first years of service began, there is not one in which I have not been called to repeat the ever varying litany of mortality. It seems to me that a very unusual proportion of our losses by death have been of the young, the strong, the middle-aged: most of whom would not be called old if they were living now. Men in their strength and prime; men of vigor and unimpaired ability, with unchanged

hair and unbowed frames; younger men, and men older, too, though not infirm; maidens in their sweet bloom of beauty and joy, the gladness and glory of fond hearts and happy homes; children, the multitude everywhere that fall before the dread sickle, like flowers hid beneath the bearded grain; mothers and fathers, leaving their young orphans, — these immature losses have, from year to year, been the burden of our hearts. Yet they have not so engrossed our grief as to deprive of their due memorial some aged and venerated men and women who were monuments among us of their earlier generations. These all have taken with them to their shadowy homes some portion of the love of surviving hearts. With how many of them was I first brought into a relation of confidence and heart-intercourse in their own most solemn hours, as the earth was passing from their eyes, and dim visions were taking shape as realities! How many scenes, curtained and shaded within the chambers of your homes, are gathered in my memory, each as distinct and complete in itself as a picture in its frame, with a life-like portrait marking its identity! And how many occasions, too, of pure, simple, and serene happiness, such as this life of earth affords, have I shared with you in these homes!

Those who have gone from us, in the way appointed for all the living, would have filled these seats. They would be full if re-occupied by those among us who have changed their places of residence.

They are filled on a pleasant Sunday morning, by our third congregation.

To one who has been privileged, as is a Christian minister among us, after many years of a pastoral relationship, to enter even into the inner life of, at least, a thousand human families, there must needs have been a revealing of the true elements and methods of our human existence, such as is opened by no other entrance-way to those manifest or secret experiences. I take from the blessed Saviour that glorious lesson, all radiant and cheerful with the illustration of his own example, that he, the only sinless being that ever lived in flesh, and knowing as no other has known what there is in man, and all that there is in him to hate or love, was the gentlest, mildest judge, the most hopeful, pitying interpreter and helper of humanity. Not in scorn, not in despair, not in any antipathy of nature or feeling, did he view the multitude. At the worst, they were to him as sheep without a shepherd. The Master's high example is the lead for his disciples; and all who have followed it, have certified to its assured effect. The closer we come to the inner heart of humanity, in the spirit of a discerning and serving sincerity, the surer is our confidence that it hides or reveals something to be hoped for or loved. Nor is this high and cheering verity of Christian experience brought under distrust by the equally certified fact, that intimate professional converse with humanity, in its animal

and physical relations, its poor infirmities of flesh and blood, its sensualisms and diseases, its abjectness of want and misery and woe, is profoundly crushing to all earth-born pride of our stock and destiny. Below all that,—the purple robes, or rags; the loathsomeness of disease, or the hideousness of dissolution, — below all of which eye or other sense takes observance, penetrate to the heart, — often the poor and wayward and erring, and sometimes, even, the poisoned heart, — and, if your spirit shares the light which was the blessed Saviour's atmosphere of vision, you will pity, and then, by pitying, love, the children of God.

So, I believe, even the true-hearted physician will testify. So, I know, that all of the most honored and revered of the chief sages of law, civil or criminal, the high justices on their benches of wisdom, have testified. And so a Christian minister, following his Master, if he can, will love to testify, that the farther he sees within the doors of dwellings and of hearts, the more tender and earnest are the sympathies which draw his own heart, through the yearnings of a common humanity.

Such is my grateful experience and testimony. Privileges and opportunities — often a matter for my thoughtful and grateful reflection when alone — have allowed me to share a familiar intercourse with men and women in every grade and rank and position of the social, intellectual, and even moral scale. Their characters and ways, their virtues and their frailties, have so varied to me the unexhausted instruction of

life, that I can rest in no doctrinal or philosophical view which I have ever met with about it. The sternness and the mystery of the processes to which humanity is subjected, would, of themselves alone, suggest some result analogous to those which, in the material world, produce things of highest value by the roughest and severest agencies. How are the tinted flowers and the luscious fruits of the earth generated from things most foul! What crushings and torturings, by blows and fires, separate the metal from the dross! What decompositions and distillations, with their choky fumes and vapors, are the methods for educing the virtues of the chemist's laboratory! If humanity contains a possibility of pure good, is not the earthly experimenting with it a hopeful process? the severest, perhaps the best, for perfecting it? Do you look to the pulpit and the religious teacher to penetrate and open to you this mystery of human life? My friends, his highest, holiest office is, not to relieve, but to make you realize and feel that mystery; to draw you and keep you under its shadow. Explain it! We can explain nothing. Listen reverently to that divine Teacher, around whom that mystery gathers its thickest, and yet its brightest folds, and who alone has spoken from within it words which pierce it for our faith.

Not a few of us within these walls now think we can appreciate the alternative to which the intense and defiant religious, or, it may be, irreligious, restlessness of our times has brought us. The whole debate

of these passing years, in the higher planes of speculation and scientific inquiry, has opened to us that alternative, as it bears upon the interests of religion,— of religion, certainly, as a matter which can gather and edify congregations, in offices, institutions, and ordinances, and can dispense to them simple lessons of earnest, Christian piety.

A few of those who, from their childhood, have had the full, and often the selectest training of the Christian faith, are asking, if the roomier cradle of nature, and its unroofed nursery, will not be as fond and safe in their nurture for the infants who are born from these days onward; and if, when they grow up, they will feel the need of any Church, save one identical with humanity, as it now is. Critical and speculative tests seek to invalidate the historical credentials of revelation, and to detach from the personal Christ all the traditional and reverential associations of a superhuman essence or manifestation; to make him a myth, in order to prove that he was the solid centre of many myths. A form or method of science takes up the whole opened problem at its own facile stage of it, and proceeds to find, in physical elements, properties, and developments, a positive philosophy. We see on the diagram the skeleton of a man, arranged in a line with those of a gorilla, a chimpanzee, and an orang-outang; and the question is, whether a bone in the heel, a flexible thumb, or an organic distinction in the brain, marks the specific transition. The whole problem suggests to us its solution, in the

theory that man is the last product of the incubation of time, over the single impregnated egg of nature.

Meanwhile our Christian faith, with its lofty spiritual truths, and its own spirit of truth, will secure us from all childish fears lest speculation or science should deprive the world of religion; while it will give us largeness of mind, tolerance, and curiosity to learn all that this roaming exploration of the unknowable and the unfindable can haply disclose. There is rich material opening for the use of the most gifted and the most devout religious teachers from the pulpit, to replace all obsolete or discredited sanctities. Even the oldest words and phrases of our evangelical faith will be found elastic enough, in their symbolic meaning, to be used in the sacred desk as the terms for announcing and for consecrating all of new truth, which man learns as God reveals it.

If for you and for me, through these past five and twenty years, the gospel of the grace of God has furnished lessons and influences which have made most of us better and wiser and happier, we will again express our grateful thankfulness for the flowing spring of healing and of blessing, and renew our reverential love to Him who has opened the wells of salvation for us on the highways of our earthly life.

HISTORICAL NOTE.

There is one distinguishing fact in the origin of the "Harvard Church Society," (first incorporated as "The Second Congregational Society") in Charlestown, which gives it interest in our local ecclesiastical history. My much esteemed friend, Rev. W. I. Budington, D.D., now of Brooklyn, N. Y., was ordained as Pastor of the First Church in this town six weeks after the day of my own ordination. I shared with his own parishioners and nearest friends the deep regret felt at the dissolution of his connection with them after fifteen years of faithful and highly appreciated service here. He was beloved by all of us. We began our relations to the two parts of the divided fold of the old Congregational fellowship of Massachusetts, with a frank and kindly understanding which was always pleasantly kept between us. He could of course regard me only as an heretical encroacher upon a field which traditionally seemed to belong to him. I had the start of him, however, and his courtesy allowed me to make the most of that fact. He had full permission from me to win back to, and to keep in his own ancient fold, any member of my Society whose religious wants or welfare he could serve better than myself.

In the winter of 1842–3, Mr. Budington delivered a series of discourses on the History of his Church which he afterwards published with notes. The volume is of great value, containing the results of conscientious labor in research, and many memorials of things and persons tenderly and reverentially connected with this ancient town and with the hearts of many of its present inhabitants. Especially would I commend the volume for the kind-

liness of spirit, and the earnest sincerity of conviction which give it so high and edifying a tone.

In the last of his Lectures, Mr. Budington deals with the schism which divided the Congregational body, and he does it as he promised to do, "in the spirit of a Christian," presenting facts "as he had been able to obtain them from authorities on each side of the question." With all respect for him, I have been led to doubt whether he had knowledge of all the facts, and especially of some of peculiar weight in relation to one of his predecessors, which at the time of the schism affected its local action here. He commends those who seceded from his church to form our own, for pursuing a course "obviously marked out by honor and integrity;" and the implication is conveyed, even if gently and without bitterness, that, in this respect, the Unitarians of Charlestown acted more uprightly than did their brethren in Boston, and many other places, "who, by help of decisions of the courts, deprived our (the Orthodox) churches of funds bequeathed to them for the support of the gospel, and drove them forth from their houses of worship, and from communion-tables, spread with sacramental furniture, &c." The fact which furnishes Mr. Budington with the matter of this distinction is, that when his predecessor, Dr. Morse, opened and inflamed the controversy which divided the Congregationalists, Unitarians, so called, were in a minority in the First Church and Society. As a minority, if they wished no longer to listen to preaching based on the Westminster, or Calvinistic doctrines, they were compelled to withdraw, and establish another Church. Had they been a majority, as they proved to be in all the other then existing Congregational Churches in Boston, save one, and in the First Churches of so many neighboring and distant towns, as Roxbury, Dorchester, Plymouth, Quincy, Salem, Cambridge, Chelsea, Lexington, Waltham, &c. &c, &c., they might have modified their church covenants and chosen Unitarian pastors. But it would not be to the honor of the first promoters of a Unitarian Church in Charlestown to be complimented at the expense of their brethren in other places for having, as a minority, pursued one course, when, if they had been a majority in the membership of the First Church and Society here, they would doubtless have pursued a different course; the same as that of their

fellow-believers under their circumstances. I should shrink, even with disgust, from every purpose of reviving the bitterness of an old controversy. But as often as a reflection is cast upon the men and women who have been known for two generations in these communities, as Unitarians, — a reflection implying dishonesty or any meanness, some one ought to be prepared to withstand it. The class of Christians who bear that name as a denomination, have had the repute of integrity and liberality in secular affairs. May it not be hoped, that sooner or later they will be safe from the reiteration of the charge (which is renewed against them in the recently published life of Rev. Dr. Beecher) of purloining church-edifices, funds, and sacramental vessels?

To those among us who fifty years ago held, or who hold now, though only in a softened and modified form, the stern creed of the fathers of New England, it was, and is, of course, a severe trial to see any of the churches reared on their foundations departing from the old Calvinistic formulas. As a natural human sorrow, and one which took hold of very tender and pious sensibilities, I would respect this feeling and never treat it with rudeness. But the course of things by which several of our religious edifices with their furnishings and endowments, passed through the ownership and use of those who, after resting in various phases of so-called Orthodoxy, finally accepted some phase of so-called Unitarianism, was one which had been made familiar in all Christian history. In previous operations of it, it would not have been objected to by the Orthodox themselves. It was by essentially the same process that the Jewish Synagogue and the Roman Basilica, with their furniture and funds, passed into the hands and uses of Christian worshippers. By the same process the cathedrals, parish churches, ecclesiastical and charitable funds of the Reformation-countries of Europe were made over from their Roman Catholic origin and consecration to the uses of Protestantism. Probably John Calvin and his reformed flock felt no compunctions of conscience in removing from the great Cathedral Church of Geneva all traces of the "Romish idolatry," and securing it for their own worship. Why should the Unitarians of Geneva who now hold and worship in that edifice be challenged for their lawful succession to it?

Parish property and "Church" property were, to a great extent, confounded from the first settlement of New England, especially in Massachusetts. The meeting-houses were built and kept in repair, and the ministers were supported by a tax on the inhabitants who were assessed in the same way for the highways and schools. Lands, money and articles of church-plate, and books, were bequeathed as additions to a common sacred deposit, by communicants and non-communicants irrespectively. Indeed it may be affirmed as altogether possible, that the larger portion of all sacred bequests among us, may have come from non-communicants. The right of "church-members" exclusively to choose and institute the ministers, whom all the non-electors, the parishioners generally, were compelled to support, was from the first, a vexatious and arbitrary prerogative; and the attempts to relieve its tyrannical exercise have left a whole series of modifying and repealing statutes on our legislative records. As the old Calvinistic formulas gradually became discredited in our churches, and various degrees of liberality of sentiment marked their presence and influence in our communities, the Calvinistic church covenants were toned down, and the terms of admission to full communion were made easier for Christian consciences. In most cases, the minister, the church-members, and the parishioners all yielded to the advancing liberalism. In cases in which the minister and a small church-fellowship clung to the old formulas, they could prevent the accession to the Church of any more liberal members. Then, if the communicants chose to claim the control of parish property, and the election of a Calvinistic successor in the pulpit, what was to become of the rights of parishioners who were to support the minister? The question equally concerned their rights in the church as in the highways and schools and the burial-ground.

The Unitarians might be a large majority in the membership of the parish. They had no occasion to purloin churches, or the communion-plate. But should they abandon their property to leave it to the shadow of Calvinism? Should they surrender the pews which they had built, or which their fathers had bequeathed to them, and in which they had sat and worshipped from their childhood?

Besides, then as now there were in every congregational Church, few or many, and sometimes possibly a majority of members in full communion, who were not proprietors or pew-holders in the parish. Did their acceptance of the covenant invest them with proprietary rights above those of the actual owners?

The legal decisions, on which Mr. Budington reflects, gave the right of succession and control, as respects all parish property, — and of this, "Church" property was considered an undistinguishable part, — to the majority of those who were, in a legal sense, parishioners. The decisions in some few cases operated with painful severity, and with a seeming breach of the rule of equity. But what a vastly greater amount of injustice and oppression would have followed from an opposite decision!

I had freely expressed my opinion and feeling, as to the effect of the legal precedent established by our Supreme Court, in my sketch of a "Half-century of the Unitarian Controversy." The late honored and revered Chief-Justice Shaw was grieved by the guarded admission of regret which I had there made. He wrote to me, and held various long conversations with me on the subject. I am at liberty now to mention, that the exposition of the legal grounds of the decision, given in the Appendix to the volume just mentioned, is from his strong and clear pen. After one of his busiest days in his court, he employed himself till midnight in my study, at the table where I am writing, in composing that statement.

It was as the result of that steady progress in liberality of sentiment, shared in equally by ministers, church-members, and parishioners, that, with two exceptions, — one in Boston, and the other in this town, — all the old churches in the vicinity and many over the State, passed into the administration of those called Unitarians. The exception in Boston was that of the Old South Church. Even that was in sore peril of sharing in "the great apostasy," and was saved only by contingencies which for a time suspended the issue. Its revered Senior Pastor at the time of the opening struggle, the Rev. Dr. Eckley, was well-known to sympathize with the then liberal party. His funeral sermon was preached by Rev. Dr. Lathrop of the North Church, an avowed liberal. In this town the Unitarians were in a minority as re-

garded their representation in the First Parish. It is to be remembered, that a Baptist Society had built a meeting-house here in 1800, and the Universalists another in 1810.

The Rev. Thomas Belsham, minister of the Essex-street Unitarian Church, London, had published memoirs of his friend, the Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, also a Unitarian (both of them having given up their orders and livings in the English Episcopal Church), in which was a chapter on Unitarianism in this neighborhood. Mr. Belsham was indebted for his facts and opinions to a correspondence with Dr. Freeman, of King's Chapel, and some other Unitarians in Boston, who had written to him freely of the progress of liberal sentiments here before the word "Unitarian" had come into use, or any public excitement had connected itself with the understood change of religious belief. Dr. Morse seized upon the contents of this chapter, which he caused to be published in several editions, as a pamphlet, entitled "American Unitarianism," and which he reviewed, *anonymously*, himself, in the "Panoplist," a periodical established by the Orthodox party. This pamphlet and review, whether so intended or not, had all the effect of a startling surprise, an astounding disclosure of secret apostasies which the guilty parties had cunningly managed to hide from the light, the more surely to work their mischief. Thus was opened that bitter controversy, which so long distracted our community; the embers of which, though they have so long been cooling, are not extinguished.

I refer to these facts not as a partisan, but in the use of history. Dr. Morse left this neighborhood in the height of the angry strife which he had inflamed. Nearly forty years have passed since he died. But there are those among the living to whom his memory and repute are dear, and to whom the work of his life was honorable and Christian, even in those elements of it which to others appeared acrimonious and intolerant. I have no desire even to vindicate those whom I think he grievously wronged, by rehearsing the reproaches of which he certainly received a large and heavy measure. He had a right to assume the championship of a cause which he professed was dearer to him than life. Men certainly his superiors in all virtues and saintliness had maintained the divine authority and the loveliness of Calvinism. We may

allow much to his natural sorrow and the disturbance of the equipoise of his temper as he saw his old historic church and parish, where Harvard and Shepherd and Morton had ministered, wasting away, because the irresistible developments of human progress around him had brought his Calvinistic creed into discredit, not to say into undisguised contempt, among those whom he met in his daily walks. But still we must remember that those whom he so severely judged were his peers at least, and many of them his superiors in wisdom and in Christian graces. He certainly tried to fix upon them the characters of artful, unbelieving, hypocritical, and unconverted men. Such men as Kirkland, Ware, Channing, and Lowell, were not to be traduced with impunity in this community by Dr. Morse, who was himself not without cold friends, even in his own doctrinal brotherhood. There is no occasion for concealing the fact, that his ministerial brethren regarded him with a distrust, and with other feelings which I will not name, such as they connected with no other of the sturdy and unsparing champions of Orthodoxy. They may have done him a grievous wrong: indeed it is altogether probable that they failed of some measure of charity to him. But it was the universal opinion of the Unitarian ministers, that Dr. Morse was largely influenced in the personalities of his course toward them by their resolute and successful purpose that he should not fill the Hollis Professorship of Divinity at Cambridge, nor even dictate who should fill it: and by their strong sympathy with Miss Hannah Adams in her complaint and charges against him for a gross outrage upon her rights as an author. Dr. Morse had been for years the intimate professional and social companion of the Boston ministers, meeting them in their semi-monthly gatherings at each others' firesides, exchanging pulpits with them, hearing them preach, and preaching before them at ordinations and in his turn at the weekly Thursday lecture. He knew all the professional "secrets." He was perfectly familiar with the general current of opinion and sentiment among them, and could doubtless measure the doctrinal temperature of each one of his brethren. Those brethren, therefore, could hardly regard it as a magnaminous or fraternal act on his part, when he caused the reprint here of an English publication which he set before the community as contain-

ing matter of painful surprise, and revealing guilty secrets about those brethren. He professed, also, to share in the astonishment and anxiety which he thus sought to stir up among "the friends of religion." Though the materials which he thus turned to account were private letters, his brethren knew full well that there was not a single fact disclosed in them, of which he had not been for years as well informed as themselves.

I have heard from persons in this town who had means for forming an intelligent judgment in the case, that, had the pastor of the First Church at the time been a man of another spirit, though holding the Orthodox creed, it is doubtful whether there would have been a secession from the Church and society sufficiently strong in numbers and means to have formed a Unitarian or Liberal parish when our own was established. Elements of disaffection previously existing having twice found relief in the formation of the Baptist and Universalist Societies, the remnant, none too strong, might have remained undivided.

But if Dr. Morse could not compromise, neither could he pacify nor harmonize differences. His course as a controversialist determined the action of those who formed our Society. Some of the most influential and prominent members of his Church and parish initiated the movement of secession to form a Liberal Congregational Church.

In 1815, the Executor of Mr. Harrison, then recently deceased, offered for sale an edifice of which he had become the proprietor, and which had been occupied by a Baptist Society as a house of worship. After serving our own Society for a brief period, as a place for its formation and consolidation, the edifice has till recently been occupied as a Methodist Church. Still standing at the head of Salem Street, after various re-adaptations, it is divested of the upper portion of its tower; a tall flag-staff being substituted, to mark its use as an armory. Fifty subscribers, — only two of whom, Mr. William Hurd and Mr. Reuben Hunt, now survive, — united to purchase the edifice, to put it in proper order, and to provide for the sale of the pews. Each subscriber took a single share at fifty dollars. The subscribers met, Dec. 28, 1815, to perfect their business arrangements, in "Massachusetts Hall," which occupied the site of our present church. They

were incorporated by an act of the Legislature, Feb. 9, 1816, as "The Second Congregational Society in Charlestown." Public worship was first held by them on May 9, Rev. President Kirkland officiating. The first minister, Rev. Thomas Prentiss, of Medfield, — a graduate of Harvard College, of 1811, — was ordained Wednesday, March 26, 1817. The sermon was preached by President Kirkland. So prosperously had the affairs of the new society been conducted, that the records show a surplus balance of funds of about four thousand dollars, to be invested for the society, at the settlement of Mr. Prentiss.

The young minister had an arduous duty before him, which would have been lightened by the zeal of kind friends. He was highly esteemed for talents and virtues. But his life and work were appointed to be but short. Looking forward to his marriage, he was an inmate in the family of Captain E. T. Holmes (in the house now owned and occupied by Paymaster Bates, United-States Navy). There, after a brief illness of eleven days, by typhus fever, and a ministry of six months and ten days, he died on Sunday, Oct. 5, 1817. He was buried from his church on the Wednesday following; his friend, Rev. Henry Ware, jun., of Boston, preaching his funeral discourse, and the society rendering all respect, as a token of their love and sorrow.

On the day of the ordination, an Ecclesiastical Council, after the usages of Congregationalism, was convened to recognize a "Church fellowship," in the new society. It was composed of President Kirkland, Moderator; Professor Ware of Cambridge; Rev. Messrs. Harris of Dorchester, Greene of Malden, Peirce of Brookline; Channing, Lowell, Frothingham, and Ware, of Boston; Abbot of Salem, Allen of Northboro, and Hurlbut of Sudbury, — with the delegates of their respective churches. The Pastor elect, dismissed and recommended by the church in Medfield, and four brethren and nine sisters, by the same form, from the First Church in Charlestown and in Medford, were recognized in their new relations. Several other members from the First Church in the town were soon admitted to their fellow-

ship. Besides many transient residents and members of other churches who made no transfer of their relations to us, our fellowship received an addition of one hundred and fifty members during the ministry of Dr. Walker; and one hundred and eighty-four have joined it since.

On the institution of the church, Mr. Joseph Hurd, one of its most liberal benefactors, and one of its most honored members, presented to it a set of silver-plated vessels for the communion-table. These, having been in use forty years, and having become impaired by service, and not because of forgetfulness of the excellent donor who had died at an extreme age, were necessarily displaced. The massive silver service now in use, made in Philadelphia, and purchased from the funds of the church, was introduced in January, 1857. In the same year, Mrs. Louisa Forster, wife of the late Mr. Jacob Forster, presented to the church the richly furnished chair and table for the communion service.

In May, 1816, Mr. Joseph Hurd had also given to the society an American edition of the Holy Bible in two folio volumes. For this copy he requested me to procure a substitute by importing from England the best printed and bound copy that could be procured at his expense. Fulfilling his generous wishes, I had the pleasure, in 1842, of introducing into the pulpit, the two noble volumes which are lettered with the name of the donor.

The Hon. Josiah Bartlett presented the basin which is now used by us in the service of Baptism.

Major Timothy Walker presented in 1817 the clock which now hangs before the organ gallery. At his death, in 1837, he left a bequest of five hundred dollars to be used in recasting and adding to the weight of the bell then suspended in the tower. The rich tone of the ponderous instrument which now bears his name, and calls us together, proves that his intention was fulfilled.

On Nov. 14, 1821, Mr. John Skinner presented to the society an elegant chandelier, suspended from the centre of the ceiling of the present church when evening lectures were instituted. It was removed on the introduction of gas, and was given by the society to the First Church in Lexington, to which town Mr. Skinner had removed, and where he died.

Bequests of about two thousand dollars have been made during

the last twenty-five years to the Sunday school of the society, of which it now enjoys annually the benefit, by the Rev. Henry A. Walker, Mrs. Mary Tufts, and Mr. David Devens. The Sunday school itself was instituted, after long deliberation upon its need and use, in 1826.

The Rev. James Walker, of Burlington, a graduate of Harvard College in 1814, was ordained as the second pastor of this church and society, April 15, 1818. He resigned his office to accept a professorship in the College, and preached his farewell discourse on July 14, 1839.

The prosperity which the society enjoyed under his eminently able and faithful ministry made it the largest and most flourishing one in the town. Measures were taken, immediately after his settlement, for the erection of a new church-edifice, resulting in the building of this in which we are now assembled, at a cost of about twenty-eight thousand dollars; and at least as much more has since been expended upon it. The pews were sold on Thursday, Feb. 4, 1819; the dedication being on the following Wednesday, Feb. 10. On the occasion of occupying the new edifice, the parish voted to apply to the Legislature to have its corporate name changed from "The Second Congregational Society," to that of "The New Church Society." This latter designation was, by petition of the parish, changed by the Legislature, March 16, 1837, to that of "Harvard Church in Charlestown," in honor of the founder of the College, who preached and died in this town. In 1833, a new pulpit and organ were introduced, the church was painted, and the aisles were carpeted. Boylston Chapel was built in 1835, for lectures and the Sunday school, being in part paid for by a gift of land made to the society in 1823 by Richard Boylston. A new spire was built on the church in 1855. In 1859 the pews were taken out of the church, and a new form of seats was introduced; the organ-gallery was lowered for the better accommodation of a new organ; a recess was made behind the pulpit, with a room for the minister, and two entrances at the back of the church; the gallery stairways were altered, and the whole edifice was refitted.

The society first made use of Belknap's Collection of Psalms and Hymns. On Sept. 6, 1835, this was displaced for Peabody's Springfield Collection; which, being out of print in 1845, yielded to a compilation now in use, made by the pastor.

Thus, within the life-time of a generation, parts of the exterior as well as the interior arrangements of the church, and all the furnishings and appliances of its sacred offices, conform, as by sympathetic relations, to the law of change which is visited upon the worshippers.

HARVARD CHAPEL AND THE FREE MINISTRY.

As is intimated in the preceding discourse, an earnest appeal was made from the pulpit to the members of this church and society, in reference to our Christian obligations to that large class of poor, suffering, and neglected persons among us, who received no benefit from our religious institutions, and who, with their children, had special claims upon the benevolence and sympathy of the more privileged. The result of the appeal was a full and earnest meeting in Boylston Chapel, April 19, 1846, which was continued by adjournments, occupied by a full discussion of the subject. It was decided to establish and support among ourselves what is known in this neighborhood as a "Ministry at Large." The plan involved the obtaining of a minister especially qualified for visiting the subjects of such a ministry, and for conducting a Sunday school, aided by our own teachers and others who might join him; and also the providing a suitable place for religious meetings, and the procuring the requisite funds by an annual subscription. Two committees were appointed; one for matters of finance, the other to draw out a plan and rules for action.

The object engaged, from the first, the hearty and generous interest of the society, which has never failed it. From the evening when it was resolved upon to this day, the enterprise has been steadily and faithfully pursued; and it has had an incalculable influence for good on our own society. The Rev. N. S. Folsom, then of Haverhill, entered upon the service as minister, Oct. 11,

1846; and continued in it until feeble health compelled him to resign, in April, 1849. Till another suitable minister could be obtained, the objects had in view were served, as far as possible, by the continuance of the labors of our teachers in the Sunday school of the Chapel, and by religious services there on alternate Sunday evenings. On July 8, 1850, the Rev. Oliver C. Everett, then of Northfield, being invited to the work, entered upon it in the October following, and still discharges its arduous but not unrewarding labors, with eminent fidelity.

Harvard Chapel, in which he preaches, and superintends a large Sunday school, takes the place of another smaller edifice in which our work was begun, and which was provided for our use at the sole expense of the late Hon. H. P. Fairbanks, one of the first and most earnest friends of the object. The Chapel, built by subscription in our society, at a cost, with its furnishings, of over ten thousand dollars, was dedicated Feb. 12, 1856; all bills being paid, and a balance of three hundred dollars being left in our favor in the Treasury. The annual expense for the support of the free ministry, including the poor's purse, averages about sixteen hundred dollars.